

## Local composer and professor create a musical ode to service

By Barbara Curtin

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The Willamette Master Chorus' concerts next weekend contain a gift for veterans and members of the armed services: a major choral work composed just for them. "The Call," a 15-minute piece for choir and orchestra, honors the victories and sacrifices of American servicemen and women. It features music by Salem's Dave Metzger, a Grammy award-winner ("The Lion King," "Tarzan"). The text is by Henry Hughes, an associate professor at Western Oregon University and winner of an Oregon Book Award.

A 35-piece orchestra will accompany approximately 220 singers in performances in Albany and at Willamette University. Guest choirs from West Albany High School, South Albany High School and Linn-Benton Community College will join the master chorus on stage.

"I find it to be an extraordinary piece of music," said Dr. Paul Klemme, Willamette Master Chorus director. "I think this composition is going to live into the future. As long as people get a chance to hear it, they will want to hear it again and perform it."

Metzger and Hughes had never met before Klemme asked them to collaborate on this project. Each began work alone, then exchanged computer files with the other.

"Unlike a lot of free verse, I had to write metrically, in a pattern," said Hughes during a recent interview in Metzger's South Salem studio.

"Which I was very thankful for," Metzger responded, in a kind of call-and-response that mirrored their creative process.

Metzger sent Klemme and Hughes an MP3 synthesizer demo of a theme he had composed earlier but had never used.

"When I got that music, I was really moved," Hughes said. "I played the MP3, and I was able to lay down words with a very distinct meter."

### At a glance

What: Veterans Concert by Willamette Master Chorus, featuring premiere of "The Call" by Dave Metzger and Henry Hughes. Includes sets by guest choirs plus patriotic songs directed by Paul Klemme

When and where: 7:30 p.m. Friday, First Assembly of God Church, 2817 Santiam Highway SE, Albany, and 3 p.m. Nov. 13, Smith Auditorium, Willamette University

Tickets: \$20, \$15 for seniors, \$12 for veterans and military personnel, and \$5 for students, available online at [www.WillametteMasterChorus.org](http://www.WillametteMasterChorus.org); from chorus members; at Travel Salem; and at the box office on the day of event. Tickets for the Albany performance are available at State Farm Insurance, 340 SW Washington St., Albany.

Information: (503) 370-6929 or [www.WillametteMasterChorus.org](http://www.WillametteMasterChorus.org)

About the composer and lyricist: [www.davemetzgermusic.com](http://www.davemetzgermusic.com) and [www.henryhughespoetry.wordpress.com](http://www.henryhughespoetry.wordpress.com)

The call, the call, from burning fields and houses

The call, the call, from cities bombed and routed.

Metzger added, "I went back and wrote music to what Henry had originally written ... It was the ultimate collaboration."

The challenge, both said, was to keep the piece from sounding sentimentally patriotic or as though it glorified war. The final words and music express community support, as well as soldiers' uncertainty, hardships and fears.

"This piece attempts to honor veterans all over the world," Hughes said. "It's not about triumph."

He wrote four interludes that will be spoken by veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq and Afghanistan. They're inspired by his conversations with his neighbor Bill Diehn, his WOU students and Charles Hughes, his dad.

Pressed to play the piece, Metzger booted up the computer file, and brightly colored bars signifying orchestral instruments filled one of the screens. Scrolling through page after page of the score, Metzger sang the melody line (first warning that the master chorus would sound far better). Even in this form, the piece was by turns reverent, heroic and somber.

"That's my father," Hughes whispered, as words of a Korean vet appeared.

The piece built toward a jubilant conclusion, expressing gratitude to service members and joy for their return.

The two men have attended rehearsals with the chorus.

"The music is one thing," Metzger said. "When you hear the words, it lifts it to another level."

Neither will make any money from the effort. Hughes worked for free, partly because he believes in the project and partly because he was thrilled to write a poem that thousands will hear.

Metzger rolled his fee back into hiring a larger orchestra than Klemme had planned, plus arranging for a professional recording. He and Hughes hope to see the piece performed elsewhere and perhaps to interest a publisher.

"This is an opportunity to do something I want to do instead of something a director will change 1,000 times," Metzger said.

"As I get older, I look at giving back, what can you do for the community."

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The call, the call, some join and  
some are drafted.

The call, the call, Guard ordered  
to report.

The call, the call, in line they take  
their places.

The call, the call, their late  
goodbye embraces

They rise, young soldiers, from  
cold camp bunks,

To run, before light, to drill in rain  
and sun.

Under helmets and shouts,  
shaking sweat and steel.

Learn to move, to listen, to  
destroy and to heal.